

Carrizo Plain National Monument Advisory Committee
January 23, 2010, meeting notes

Attendees:

MAC – Neil Havlik (left at noon), Bob Pavlik, Carl Twisselman, Ellen Cypher, Ray Hatch, Michael Khus-Zarate, Jim Patterson (left at noon), Dale Kuhnle.

BLM: Johna Hurl, Tim Smith, Kathy Sharum, Larry Saslaw, Ryan Cooper, David Christy, Nancy Dodson, Judy Sackett.

Public: Cal French, Pat Veesart, Lodema Hatch, Craig Deutsche, Peter Douglas, Dorie Giragosian, Kathleen Buttke, Larry Buttke and Pati Nolen.

Tim Smith, Bakersfield Field Office manager, welcomed attendees. He said BLM has started work on getting the MAC charter renewed since it expires in July.

Officers:

Jim Patterson moved and Carl Twisselman seconded a motion to re-elect Neil Havlik MAC Chair and Ellen Cypher Vice Chair. Motion passed.

Resource Management Plan

Tim Smith said BLM released the proposed final RMP on November 13 and has received three protests (Bidart Bros.; Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter; joint Western Watersheds Project, Center for Biological Diversity, Los Padres ForestWatch protest). Protests are resolved at the Washington level.

Public comments on the draft RMP were considered in developing the final RMP, which included a response to comments. The final RMP was reviewed by BLM at the state and Washington offices and by the Solicitor's office.

BLM Washington will review whether the state office followed the correct procedures and whether the document is consistent with law and policy. BLM Washington has 90 days to resolve the protests (until March 24). BLM is identifying the issues to be considered, with the following identified so far: National Environmental Policy Act requirements, best available science, monitoring and grazing. The Solicitor's Office will review the proposed protest response.

BLM also is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Biological Opinion.

Neil Havlik asked what would happen if a protest is upheld. Tim Smith said Washington would refer that issue back to the field office to be addressed.

Neil Havlik asked if the Record of Decision could incorporate corrections. Tim Smith said it could. He said BLM hopes to sign the ROD in the spring, but there is some concern over the time needed for the Solicitor's review.

Tim Smith said there would be an important role for the MAC in developing the implementation plan after the ROD is signed.

Jim Patterson asked if BLM could modify actions following the ROD due to climate change.

Johna Hurl said the adaptive management component of the RMP will allow changes based on changing conditions.

Neil Havlik said there needs to be more discussion of the future role of the MAC, especially regarding implementation plans. He said he is personally interested in the function of springs, including as a water source for wildlife, and asked if other members had priorities they would like to see addressed.

Tim Smith said BLM will develop a business or implementation plan following the ROD that will include budget and priorities. BLM will dialogue with the MAC as the business plan is developed.

Funding

Jim Patterson asked about the federal budget timeline and if there are actions the MAC could take to help get funding for the Carrizo.

Tim Smith said the Carrizo has a baseline budget that should be adequate this year. The 2011 budget is fairly well established, with limited ability to make change, so the 2012 budget will be the first opportunity.

Johna Hurl, Monument Manager, said sometimes there are opportunities to get additional funding such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding. Tim Smith said if unfunded priorities are identified they can be submitted if there is an opportunity to get additional funding.

Larry Saslaw, BLM Biologist, said BLM has received \$250,000 for climate change work on the Carrizo. BLM is working with science advisors to plan projects such as vegetation mapping and baseline plots, and will include the MAC in the discussion.

Tim Smith gave an overview of the budget process. The Carrizo receives about \$1 million annually as a baseline budget. Johna Hurl identifies projects based on guidance from BLM in Washington and Sacramento. Compelling projects might get additional funding.

Ray Hatch said the MAC will work with BLM on the implementation plan and might have a role in helping obtain funding.

Pat Veesart, a member of the public, said there should be a public forum on how the RMP is being implemented.

Manager's Report

Johna Hurl reported on projects that have been completed or are in progress. BLM received ARRA funding for projects to clean up Selby Ranch, improve Selby Road, restore habitat and protect oaks.

At National Public Lands Day, volunteers worked at Selby Campground to move a kiosk, improve trails and fix a retaining wall at the restrooms.

Fencing has been replaced at KCL Campground and a building has been restored at Cow Camp.

Public Comment

Peter Douglas said proposed solar projects outside the monument will destroy the landscape and the MAC should take a position opposing the projects.

Cal French said Wilderness Study Areas in the monument should be designated as Wilderness, which will require legislation. Congressman McCarthy needs to visit the monument and the MAC should be involved in the visit. Large wilderness bills have had difficulty in Congress, but wilderness bills for smaller areas have been passing.

Neil Havlik said an Environmental Impact Report is being prepared for the solar projects and he has some concerns about them.

Jim Patterson said Asra project was withdrawn, but two projects remain. San Luis Obispo County is in the permitting process and it will be several months before information is available. He can arrange for county staff to brief the MAC. Atascadero and Santa Margarita are interested in becoming gateway communities to the monument. He has if BLM will be involved in the solar project review.

Tim Smith said the projects are outside the jurisdiction of BLM, but BLM will provide information to contractors working on the EIR.

Ellen Cypher asked if there would be a problem if the MAC became involved.

Tim Smith said the MAC is chartered as an advisory group to BLM and commenting on a non-BLM issue is outside the scope of the charter.

Johna Hurl said BLM has had some discussions with Atascadero and Santa Margarita regarding gateways. An event is being planned at the Carrizo on April 10 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the National Landscape Conservation System.

Larry Saslaw said 23,000 acres of the farmland that was more recently cultivated is a restoration priority and BLM is working on restoring native vegetation.

Native American Advisory Committee

Michael Khus-Zarate, NAAC chair, said it will be incumbent on the NAAC, not just BLM, to implement the RMP.

A permit system has been identified for access to Painted Rock that would both regulate access and educate the public. A process has been identified that incorporates adaptive management to address any impacts to Painted Rock or the rock art. There will be tours and periodic closures, as at present. When Painted Rock is open there will be self-issued permits visitors will sign that

state the conditions to visit Painted Rock. Studies have shown if people are required to sign a document they will comply with the conditions listed on the document. The NAAC has asked BLM to keep a visitation log.

Craig Deutsch, a member of the public, said he was impressed with the language on the permit. Preserving Painted Rock should be a high priority.

Johna Hurl said BLM is working on other historical/archaeological projects including building stabilization at Washburn Ranch and preparing a baseline report for Painted Rock.

Gateways

Ray Hatch said Taft has had a gateway agreement with BLM for about five years. The agreement doesn't obligate either party, but allows them to work together on projects. The Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center has brochures and other information on the Carrizo and information is carried on the chamber's electronic sign. Three more electronic signs are being installed at entrances to the city and they also will carry that information. The partnership has been very successful and also should work for Atascadero and Santa Margarita. Up to half the visitors to the chamber ask about the Carrizo and a visitors' guide has been printed.

Johna Hurl said it has been helpful to have information available in Taft, especially when the Carrizo Visitors' Center is closed.

Other business

Dale Kuhnle asked if the BLM law enforcement ranger is leaving. Tim Smith said he is not.

Larry Saslaw said U.C. Berkeley has a successful research program at the Carrizo. Studies on giant kangaroo rats and other species have produced good data, including data gathered using radio telemetry. Students are doing their theses at the Carrizo including a study of kangaroo rats and livestock.

Carl Twisselman asked about the relationship with BLM and U.C. Berkeley. Larry Saslaw said it has been a collaborative process with U.C. Berkeley, the Nature Conservancy, the California Department of Fish and Game and BLM.

Future MAC meetings will include presentations on research at the Carrizo.

Next MAC meeting date to be announced.